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1962/10/25

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TELCON
McNamara
Ball
10/25/62, 8:35 a.m.

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McNamara - They are going along famously. We got that Bucharest. We hailed her, and she responded and told us her cargo, and we passed her on through, and we are shadowing her.

Ball - Terrific.

McNamara - I am trying to go through a little strategy session, and I am listening to the various things that have happened that indicate that ~~the situation~~ K is proceeding very, very cautiously, no matter what he says.

Ball - You saw this letter last night.

McNamara - I did. The letter last night, and I am checking to be perfectly sure that I interpreted this correctly in relation to that letter. The letter says our instructions to sea captains are to proceed according to the norms of sea and not to respond to the blockade procedures. I believe I am correct in saying that the norm of the sea is for ships passing at sea to identify themselves. Soing-so, who are you? The ships respond "I am soing-so, from soing-so, going to soing-so." It is not a norm of the sea to ~~say~~ say what are you carrying, and the vessel to respond I am carrying POI. If I am correct, they have already deviated from the norms and responded to our quarantine. Now the question is what to do next, and this is what we are talking about.

~~the situation~~ Ball - What ships are inside.

McNamara - Nothing of any interest to you. Therefore, we can't do much by that procedure in the next few hours - ~~at~~ 4 to 48 hours. The criteria I would apply is (a), they need to be legal, S(b) they need to be such that they put pressure on K, and (c) they need to be done in a way that doesn't lose our support of our allies or neutrals.

Ball - At the President's request last night, I got Stevenson to talk to UT about getting some kind of fast appeal, but I'm sure I don't want to kill that this morning.

McNamara - Maybe you would want to hold it until 10 o'clock. There are a lot of things we can do herewith just my three criteria and we can ~~not~~ escalate this. My whole thought of a blockade ~~argument~~ argument is that we escalate it as we choose.

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Ball - We establish it first.

McNamara - Right, and that stops the offensive weapons. Now what we want to do is get the weapons out. How do we do that?

Ball - I am whooly with you.

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